



Pastor's Corner

The Tea Stall Stop

"Narendra Modi's Chai-pe-Charcha (Talk over Tea) for the Prime Ministerial chair will go down in electoral history as one of the most original mass contact idea" writes R. Prasannan of The Week. Indeed says Prasannan, "Kerala's communists had used tea-shops as debating rooms and study classes in the 50s and 60s. Prasannan laments that the 'tea culture' is withering away in the State under the onslaught of gen-next coffee shops!"

The write up brought back memories of my earlier pastoral visits 18 years ago, when as a new Bishop I was hardly known to anyone. Much worse, many people in this State did not know who a bishop is and



what is a diocese. For them a school Principal is the highest authority!

It was Fr. Cyprian, SVD, who first talked me into going to the 'bazaar.' After a short visit of the market we sat at the tea stall for a chai-chat, and automatically a conversation ensued, if for no other reason at least for curiosity sake. Before long we had a number of people milling around asking all kinds of questions about the Catholic Church, the Bishop, Religion, Politics and the like. Fr. Cyprian could say to me, 'Bishopji this is evangelization.'

Yes indeed I continue that practice even today and the tea stall has been one small step of being present to the people especially in rural Tripura. As Prasannan writes that politics is about talking to the masses and connecting with people, I think the Church must find ways and use all the means at our disposal to proclaim the good news by connecting with people.

The Spirit blows wherever He wills; soon we will be celebrating Pentecost and remembering the birthday of our Diocese. I thank Almighty God for His numerous blessings all throughout the last 18 years.

+Lumen, CSC



Editorial

An Array of 'New' Things

'New life' is an oft-heard phrase in these post-Easter days. The Liturgy of this season presents many New Testament persons whose lives Easter turned upside down and made totally new. It not only gave them new occupations and lifestyles but also new dreams and beliefs.

On 22nd of last month, something momentous for the Diocese of Agartala took place in the Parish of Kathalcherra, the Priestly Ordination of Fr. Lawrence Darlong. Every Ordination, no doubt, is extraordinary and focus-worthy, particularly in a place like Tripura where Ordinations are few and far between. The Ordination of Lawrence, however holds special interest and easily becomes a talking point, as it marked the birth of the first diocesan priest from among the 'indigenous' tribes of Tripura.



On 27th of last month again, something momentous for the Diocese of Agartala took place. The mission station called Baijalbari, in Khowai District, was raised to the status of a Parish and inaugurated. As elsewhere, in Tripura too, it is seen that with the arrival of a Parish, distances shrink and the area begins to develop much faster. The Baijalbari plot of land, made available 23 years ago, thus became

the proud nerve-centre of church activities in the Khowai area.

It is anathema, of course, to talk about the 'new' things in April in Tripura without mentioning 'Poila Baishak' the Bengali New Year. The human desire to conclude the old chapter and begin a new one is seldom better exemplified elsewhere than in the thousand rituals that surround the 'misti n dhoi' laden festival called 'Poila Baishak'.

In a couple of weeks from now, this great nation of ours shall have a new dispensation at the helm. We have seen parties vying with each other in promising to the people a 'new' and 'better' deal in the future new opportunities, new methodologies, new schemes.

It is also a joyful matter that the 18 year old Diocese of Agartala, continues to experience the freshness and vigor of new things new ordinations, new parishes, new villages, new approaches. As we move toward the great feast of Pentecost, we look forward to a renewal of our lives. The excitement and boldness that surround the age of 18 must also be felt in our hearts the daring, at His word, to cast the net into waters hitherto untested!

J. Pulinthanath, sdb

Happy Anniversary

Bishop Lumen Monteiro was ordained and installed as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Agartala on May 26, 1996. LINK offers felicitations to our Bishop on the occasion of his Episcopal Anniversary.



ANNOUNCEMENT

A Kokborok Learning Course (Basic) specifically for Priests and Religious will be organized at Don Bosco Peace Centre Agartala, 2-14 June 2014. Those interested may contact, for details and registration: DB Peace Centre Agartala, Tel: 9436126649.

ST. ARNOLD PARISH, GANDACHERRA

Grateful to God

April 10 was the day given to us to acknowledge the blessings



of God. Ten of our parishioners who are financially poor were helped by generous hearts from *Fratelli Dimenticati* with a new house. Through the efforts of Bishop Lumen and Fr. Robert we received this great help. People from interior villages were selected for this help. They were really very happy to receive this gift for which they



also contributed something. Work was done under the supervision of Fr. Bosco, the Parish Priest. After completing the work, Bishop Lumen Monteiro, CSC, blessed and inaugurated the houses on 10th April. We could see the joy on the faces of our people. Fr. Robert also was present there. **Fr. Bosco Lathees**



ST. ALPHONSA PARISH KHUMULWNG

Meaningful Holy Week and Easter

We had a meaningful Palm Sunday celebration at three locations of the Parish by three priests. People participated with great devotion and enthusiasm by waving palm branches and singing throughout the Procession. Maundy Thursday also witnessed the true love and service among the parishioners at three places. People were moved by 'the washing of the feet' of the villagers by a priest; this brought them closer to each other. Good Friday service was very moving. People had no difficulty in participating in the Way of the Cross despite the heat, covering long distances to the Church. It was truly witnessing Christ. Good Friday service left the parishioners reflecting on the Passion of Jesus. Easter Vigil and the Easter celebration in the Parish were truly meaningful enhancing the faith of the people. **Fr. Arun Minj, SVD**



ST. JOSEPH PARISH, AGARTALA

Meaningful Holy Week and Easter

The procession with the palm leaves from Holy Cross School to the Church in commemoration of the triumphant entry of Christ to Jerusalem marked the beginning of a meaningful celebration of the Holy Week. The main celebrant Fr. Emmanuel, CSC, highlighted the humble nature of Christ we need to assume in our daily living. The spirit of Holy Week was kept up with the celebration of the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday. The Eucharist invited us to wash one another's feet. The Eucharistic



Community will be characterized by their love for one another, their willingness to share what they have and their preparedness to wash one another's feet. Following the Lord on His painful way to Calvary, the parish organized a prayerful Way of the Cross through the streets of Agartala Town. Fr. Roby, CSC, who played the role of Jesus in the colorful enactment of Lord's passion made the people experience the realm of the divine. The Good Friday services saw Fr. Jeevan, SVD, leading the large number of faithful who observed the day as fasting and abstinence in serious prayer. 'The power of the Resurrection is experienced in human life at every nook and corner but never in isolation away from death experiences. There is always some kind of dying taking place aligned with resurrection', said Fr. George Jacob, CSC, who was the main celebrant for night Vigil. It is true that every true disciple of Christ must pray with St. Paul: "I want to know him and to experience the power of his resurrection and share in his sufferings and become like him in his death so that I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11). Easter greetings exchanged in this spirit will certainly make way for a joy and peace-filled life for everyone.

Fr. Arun. D., CSC

ST. ANDRE PARISH, BODHJUNG NAGAR

Lenten Grace

Mr. S. Debbarma of St. Andre Parish Bodhjungle Nagar writes: "we were blessed during this Lenten season by the presence of our dear Bishop Lumen Monteiro in our Parish. He introduced Fr. Jilson Tom to the possession of the Parish on 6th April in the presence of a large number of parishioners."



The Bishop then made his way to Urwa where we had a meaningful liturgy amidst the Catholic communities from the surrounding villages. It was a moving occasion for the faithful at Urwa as they were eagerly waiting for that moment of grace. As we gratefully acknowledge and thank our Lordship for his visit and Lenten message, we also pray that he and the Diocese of Agartala be blessed abundantly. **Fr. Jilson, CSC**



Our Readers Write

Thanks bishop for the LINK. *Sr. Clara, BS, Silchar*

I went through your Link. Nicely edited and I can only congratulate you for doing every bit of it all or mostly "by yourself". *Neli, Delhi*

Unbelievable... that it requires «LINK» to tell us that April is in. Moreover, only dear Pope Francis and LINK give us hope that all is not lost! *Conrad, Canada*

I got the print edition of Link. I enjoy reading it-short, inspiring, insightful and informative. *Thomas Manjaly, Shillong*

Thank you for the LINK as well as the news. Congrats for being ON TIME again as usual. *Emmanuel, CSC, Agartala*

Congrats for the great things! *+George sdb, Miao*

Thank you for the Link with all the events that are taking place in our Diocese and around. *Sr. Sini, MSMHC*

Thank you. I received your kind email in which you sent attached LINK April-2014. *+Andrew Marak, Tura*

Tripura's first 'Indigenous' Diocesan Priest Ordained

The Catholic Diocese of Agartala got its first 'indigenous' diocesan priest on 22 April 2014, when its Bishop, Most Rev Lumen Monteiro CSC DD ordained Lawrence Lal



Siamrema Darlong to the Order of Priesthood at Good Shepherd Parish Church, Kathalcherra. Over 2,000 people from all parts of the State converged at Kathalcherra village in Dhalai to witness the 'laying on of hands' which made Lawrence a priest of God, forever. The 27 year old Lawrence, eldest of the 3 children of Mr. Zonunthara Darlong and Mrs. Sadhana Debbarma of New Kathalcherra village, 200 kms northeast of Agartala, is the first person from among

the indigenous tribes of Tripura to be ordained a priest for the Diocese of Agartala.

The Ordination was conferred on Lawrence during the celebration of the Holy Eucharist presided over by Bishop Lumen and concelebrated by over 40 priests. In his homily, Bishop Lumen referred to the many good qualities that Lawrence possessed as a human being but insisted that it was 'none of those' which brought him 'to the altar this morning' but 'the undeniable reality that God had chosen Lawrence to be His priest'. The prelate also thanked his parents, formators, and everyone who contributed to making and shaping the newly-Ordained what he is today.

For Lawrence the journey to priesthood began when after completing Class VII from Holy Cross High School Kathalcherra, he joined the first batch of Jeevadhara Minor Seminary, at Champaknagar in June 2000 and continued his studies at the Montfort School nearby. Lawrence did the rest of his studies in Shillong and Bangalore. His pre-ordination ministry was divided between Kamranga and Bodhjungnagar in Tripura.

Addressing the large gathering that had gathered for his Ordination, the newly ordained thanked everyone who played some role in his journey towards priesthood. He mentioned particularly his parents, first Rector Fr. Cyprian Pinto SVD, Fr. Paul Pudussery CSC and all his past Superiors.

"The Ordination of Fr. Lawrence is bound to encourage many more young boys from the Darlong community to opt for priesthood", said Mr. Paul Darlong, a Catholic leader of Kathalcherra Parish. *Spokesperson, Fr. Pulinthanath, sdb*



Diocesan Pastoral Meet - 2014



The annual Pastoral Meet was held on 15th April at Bishop's House. At the very outset Bishop invoked God's blessing and presented his Report for 2013-14 through a PowerPoint presentation. He said this was a year of many successes and reiterated that our laity has

grown and able to take up more responsibility, while our religious have crossed borders and are ready to network. While concluding his comprehensive report Bishop Lumen thanked his fellow workers the Priests, Religious and Laity for the 18 wonderful years of challenge, opportunities, support and love as we move onward.

The second Session was the presentation of Parish Reports and was chaired by Sr. Celina FMA and Mr. Tarun Debbarma. The Reports reveal that most of the Parishes were actively involved in Evangelization and spiritual growth of the faithful. A historical note on Baijalbari was heard from Fr Paul, SDB as

this centre is going to be the nineteenth Parish of the Diocese on 27th April 2014.

The third Session was a time for Reconciliation and an hour of Adoration led by Fr. Cyprian Pinto, SVD.

The post lunch Session was the presentation of the Diocesan Commission Reports and was chaired by Sr. Maria SJA and Sr. Preethi, SSps. The Reports revealed that the Diocese is moving forward not only spiritually but also in social service and health care, despite our limitations.

The climax was the Chrism Mass and fellowship meal hosted by Nandannagar Quasi-Parish; it was remarkable. The sweet melody of the choir and the beautiful decoration of the church surprised many. Fr. Davis SDB, the host Parish Priest was very generous and welcoming.

Mr. Paul S. Darlong



President appreciates Catholics' prayer for elections

Indian President Pranab Mukherjee appreciated the Church's prayers for the peaceful conduct of on going national elections when the officials of Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) called on him on 5th April. CBCI President Cardinal Baselios Cleemis, in his first meeting with President after being elected as the head of the national Bishops' Conference, said that the Church in India is praying in a special way for the peaceful conduct of the elections. Mukherjee appreciated the Church's gesture and spoke at length about the services the Church is rendering to the people of India in various fields, especially in the field of Education and Health care sectors, a CBCI press release said.



Jesuit Frans van der Lugt murdered

A priest of the Society of Jesus who refused to leave his flock in the Syrian city of Homs was murdered by an unknown gunman 8th April. Fr. Frans van der Lugt was a native of the Netherlands. He was caring for the fewer than 30 Christians who remain in the Old City district of Homs, which has been blockaded by the Syrian regime for nearly two years. Fr. Hillal said the priest was "apparently killed execution-style with shots to the head." "A man came into his house, took him outside and shot him twice in the head. In the street in front of his house," Jan Stuyt, secretary of the Dutch Jesuits, told Agence France Press. Given the siege, his body cannot be recovered.



Pope says married men could be ordained priests

A bishop who met with Pope Francis in a rare private audience on 4th April said in an interview that the two men discussed the issue of the ordination of "proven" married men *virii probati* in a serious and positive way. Bishop Erwin Kräutler, Bishop of Xingu in the Brazilian rainforest, spoke to the Pope about the forthcoming encyclical on the environment, and the treatment of indigenous peoples; but the desperate shortage of priests in the bishop's huge diocese came up in the conversation. According to an interview the Austrian-born bishop gave to the daily Salzburger Nachrichten, the Pope was open-minded about finding solutions to the problem, saying that Bishops' Conferences could have a decisive role. Bishop Kräutler was then asked whether it now depended on Bishops' Conferences, as to whether church reforms proceeded or not. "Yes," he replied. "After my personal discussion with the Pope I



am absolutely convinced of this." (*The Tablet via CNUA*)

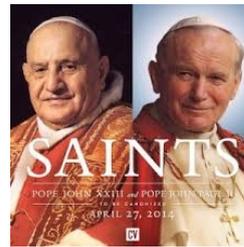
Francis wishes Benedict XVI on 87th Birthday

On April 16, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI received a call from Pope Francis sending him birthday wishes. Francis assured his predecessor that he prayed for him in a special way in his celebration of Mass. The director of the Vatican press office, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, said that Benedict XVI wanted to spend his birthday in his usual, preferred atmosphere of meditation and prayer, rather than having any particular form of celebration. zenit.org



Canonization in Rome

"They call me Holy Father and that is what I must be," the future St. John XXIII wrote in his diary. A nun who worked in the papal apartments with the future St. John Paul II saw him tired one day and said, "I'm worried about Your Holiness." And he responded, "I, too, am worried about my holiness." Most Catholics would agree the church needs holy and saintly popes, but



as the April 27 Mass for the canonization of Blessed John and John Paul approached, some questioned the need to canonize them. The debate is not new. Shortly after Blessed John Paul died in 2005 and Pope Benedict XVI waived the five-year-waiting period before his sainthood process could open, a respected Italian journalist wrote that canonizing popes was a way for "the Roman hierarchy to canonize itself." But one of the most authoritative and productive experts in the church's saint-proclaiming process, Jesuit Father Paolo Molinari, said in 2008 that "recent popes have not been proposed for sainthood just because they were popes, but because people recognized in them an excellent way of living as Christians." *By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service*

Canonization News: Up to a million pilgrims will be attending the Canonization Mass of Blessed Popes John XXIII and John Paul II on Sunday 27th April. Maurizio Pucci, chief coordinator of special projects for the Mayor of Rome, told reporters that the city estimates a minimum of 500,000 pilgrims and a maximum of a million to join the canonisation celebrations. However, some foresee a far higher number, possibly even seven million.

BISHOP'S PROGRAMME FOR MAY 2014

- 01: CBCI Standing Committee, Bangalore
- 02: NE Labour Commission Meet, Guwahati
- 03-05: NE Bishops Meet, Shillong
- 06: NEDSF GB Meet, Guwahati
- 10-11: Village Chapels Blessing, Bishramganj Parish
- 12-15: Caritas Field Visit, UP
- 16: Caritas India PSC Meet, Delhi
- 17: Parish Youth Program, Bishramganj Parish
- 18: Parish Pastoral Program, Kamaranga
- 25: Parish Feast, Mandwi
- 28-29: JUST OD by Caritas Team, Agartala
- 31-01: Parish Pastoral Program, Bagbasa

Visitors at Bishop's House

- Sr. Dominica MC, from Kolasib
- Sr. Miranda MC, from Silchar
- Mr. Stephen Gangmei, Officer from Guwahati
- Fr. Pradeep Mondol, CSsR from W. Bengal
- Mrs. Inge Buchel from Liechtenstein
- Fr. Jerome from Aizawl Diocese
- Fr. Satish, CSsR from W. Bengal